

Eastern MRS Meeting
Wilson County DSS
November 29, 2005

Counties Present: Bladen, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Greene, Nash, Onslow, Robeson, Wayne.

State Staff: Gale Trevathan, Tony Amos, Susan Sanderson, Rita Bland, Heather Skeens, Jeff Olson, Susan Moss, Holly Mc Neill, Heather Thomas

Upcoming Meetings

In January we will continue with the regional meetings but they will be geared more to the new counties that are coming on (will be talking about more basic information about start-up issues.) Any ideas for how we can still meet the needs of those counties that have already been doing MRS for awhile? One suggestion was to have Holly attend the CPR meetings so that she can touch base with folks and talk with them. Any other ideas, please let her know.

We will also have a meeting for the Original 10 counties in Greensboro on the 13th of January.

Panel Discussion of Blended Caseloads

Counties have asked about blended caseloads. Some have tried and gone back, others have not begun them. To address this, Holly has asked some counties that are doing some form of blended caseloads to talk to the group about how they are managing them.

Harnett & Durham counties presented.

Harnett

How they are set up (including history)

Did not originally do blended caseloads. When they did they started out with a pure model with the assessors keeping all cases found in need of services (INS). This was taking up way too much time, especially with the high and intensive risk families, so they just started transferring the high and intensive cases to a case manager. The assessors still keep moderate risk cases into 215. Forensic investigators send all their cases to a case manager (just like the old way). Since the forensic investigators transfer all cases and the assessors transferring high and intensive cases they have not seen much of a reduction in case management caseloads.

They have teams that include family assessors, forensic investigators, and case managers. They have a contracted facilitator. They did not switch any case managers to assessors, but they had some vacancies and when they filled those they filled them as assessors.

Dealing with overload.

To balance things out, when a worker gets too many 215 cases they will take them off rotation for a week so that they can catch up and possibly close a case.

If the assessors get too backed up a forensic investigator will take some assessments, but they won't keep any cases. So if a forensic investigator does a family assessment, it will be transferred even if it is moderate.

Other Information

There are not a lot of community services in their county and there are usually transportation issues for those that there are. They spend a lot of their time taking the clients to the service providers. Currently the worker has 5 case management cases and 10 assessments.

They think they are making more findings of not in need of services due to the frontloading of services.

Durham

How they are set up

They started slow. Not all cases that were eligible for family assessment were taken as such. They set up guidelines for which ones they would take at first and kept it pretty narrow so as to not get overloaded. They started with one assessor in each team and as they had vacancies they filled those as family assessors. They do not keep high or intensive cases. Forensic investigators do not keep cases, regardless of risk level. If an assessor starts an assessment that turns into a forensic investigation, they continue to work it. They do team decision making.

It was difficult for the supervisors to handle supervising both assessors and case managers, so they took the assessors out of the case management unit.

Dealing with Overload

Each worker has a backup person. They can be flexible because all new hires have been cross trained in case management as well as assessment.

Tony Amos talked about Work First and CPS collaboration

As these two disciplines have started talking they have realized how much they can help each other. He recommends that CPS workers look at their county Work First plan and understand a little of their lingo as well as available services (and vice versa).

Greene county is considering having Work First social workers do the assessment and possibly keeping the cases if a call come in on a family that already has an open Work First case. Because they only have 9 social workers total for CPS, Work First, and Adult Services they have to help each other out anyway. (New Hanover does something like this currently.)

Question was asked if families that are found Services Recommended coming back into the system at a higher rate?

There are currently no reports that have looked specifically at this, but we do not think so.

Heather Skeens talked a little about Guilford County and how they handle blended caseloads. For more in depth information see the meeting notes from November 28th and 30th, where Guilford presented.

Every county, at this meeting and at others, as well as Holly, stressed that the single most important thing when blending caseloads was to BE FLEXIBLE!!!!